

Jesus – The King of the Jews #42
Confusing the Traditions of Men
with the Doctrine of God
Matt 14:34-15:20

Introduction:

1. One of God's supreme commands is: "You shall not take the name of the Lord your God in vain" ([Ex. 20:7](#)).
 - a. That command obviously prohibits profanity or vulgarity in which the Lord's name is used.
 - b. It also obviously prohibits flippant, irreverent use of His name.
 - c. But more than those obvious things, it also forbids any use of God's name that is superficial, indifferent, insincere, or hypocritical.
2. It has been said that God's name is taken in vain more often inside the church than outside.
 - a. His name is taken in vain whenever it is mechanically used in repetitious prayers, in singing His praise while having no thought of Him, and in praying thoughtlessly and without genuine devotion.
 - b. His name is taken in vain through empty worship perhaps more than in any other way.
3. Hypocritical worship was among the worst offenses of ancient Israel.

[Isa 1:13](#) Bring no more vain oblations; incense is an abomination unto me; the new moons and sabbaths, the calling of assemblies, I cannot away with; it is iniquity, even the solemn meeting. [14](#) Your new moons and your appointed feasts my soul hateth: they are a trouble unto me; I am weary to bear them. [15](#) And when ye spread forth your hands, I will hide mine eyes from you: yea, when ye make many prayers, I will not hear: your hands are full of blood.
4. Even the ceremonies and observances God Himself had ordained became unacceptable, because they were offered hypocritically and without meaning.

[Isa 1:16](#) Wash you, make you clean; put away the evil of your doings from before mine eyes; cease to do evil; [17](#) Learn to do well; seek judgment, relieve the oppressed, judge the fatherless, plead for the widow. [18](#) Come now, and let us reason together, saith the LORD: though your sins be as scarlet, they shall be as white as snow; though they be red like crimson, they shall be as wool.
5. In this passage Jesus preaches the same message as those prophets: Hearts that are not right with God cannot worship Him.
 - a. Jesus was still popular with the multitudes of common people, but it was not because they trusted in Him as their Messiah-Savior but because He fed and healed them.
 - b. Their interest in Him was selfish and their devotion to Him was superficial.
 - c. They had no desire to follow Him as Lord but only to get from Him what they wanted.
 - d. They did not want to serve Him but rather wanted Him to serve their every whim.
6. Most of the religious leaders were already openly hostile to Jesus and had been plotting for some time how to kill Him ([12:14](#)).
 - a. But to keep from antagonizing the common people who still followed Jesus, the leaders tried first to discredit Him
 - b. In the present passage Jesus confronts the Jewish religious system of His day head on, showing, above all, the emptiness and worthlessness of its worship.
 - c. In doing so, He further crystallizes the irreconcilable conflict between His gospel and that system.

I. The Compassionate Healer – vs 34-36

34 And when they were gone over, they came into the land of Gennesaret. 35 And when the men of that place had knowledge of him, they sent out into all that country round about, and brought unto him all that were diseased; 36 And besought him that they might only touch the hem of his garment: and as many as touched were made perfectly whole.

A. The Quiet Land of Gennesaret

1. When Peter and Jesus got back into the boat, it was immediately at land – Jn 6:21
2. Gennesaret was a small, but beautiful, plain located between Capernaum and Magdala
3. Josephus says that it was a lush and extremely fertile area that produced a wide variety of crops
4. The land was devoted to farming and there were no cities or villages
5. It was a quiet and peaceful region – a good place for retreat and rest

B. The Quiet Interrupted

1. Jesus' plans for rest were interrupted by the crowds
2. They must have heard of the woman with the hemorrhage who had been healed by touching the hem of Jesus' garment
3. Out of compassion, Jesus honored their expression of faith and healed as many as touched his garment
4. But he wanted to do more – he wanted to heal their sin-diseased hearts
 - a) *That same day He offered himself as the Bread of life*
 - b) *To partake of Jesus would mean to never hunger and thirst again*
 - c) *Many were offended and forsook Him*

II. The Condemning Judge – vs 1-9

- Jesus offered compassion for the fickle crowds who only wanted food and healing from Him
- He also offered condemnation for the self-righteous, hypocritical religious leaders who wanted nothing from Him
- They wanted only to discredit and destroy Him
- Not only is God the God of compassion, but He also is the God of condemnation

A. The Confrontation – vs 1-2

1 Then came to Jesus scribes and Pharisees, which were of Jerusalem, saying, 2 Why do thy disciples transgress the tradition of the elders? for they wash not their hands when they eat bread.

1. Scribes and Pharisees from Jerusalem would not normally carry on their work in Galilee
2. Perhaps Jews in Galilee had asked for help from the Sanhedrin, the high Jewish counsel, in Jerusalem, in confronting Jesus
3. They were familiar with Jesus and came with the intention of proving Him to be an offender against their tradition
4. They knew that He posed a severe threat to their legalistic system
 - a) *Their religion was external and superficial*
 - b) *It could be practiced with great zeal and diligence no matter the condition of one's heart or soul*
 - c) *It was a religion of ceremony that the most hardened unbeliever could follow*
 - d) *It was concerned with appearing righteous, not being righteous*
 - e) *It was concerned with covering up sin – not exposing and cleansing it*
5. They accused Jesus of going against the traditions of the elders, not of breaking God's law
 - a) *In their minds, the traditions of the elders were superior to Scripture in the sense that they were the only reliable interpretation of God's Word*

BYZ **Matthew 14:34** Καὶ

διαπεράσαντες ἦλθον εἰς τὴν γῆν Γεννησαρέτ.

BYZ **Matthew 14:35** Καὶ ἐπιγόντες αὐτὸν οἱ ἄνδρες τοῦ τόπου ἐκείνου ἀπέστειλαν εἰς ὅλην τὴν περίχωρον ἐκείνην, καὶ προσήνεγκαν αὐτῷ πάντα τοὺς κακῶς ἔχοντας·

BYZ **Matthew 14:36** καὶ παρεκάλουν αὐτόν, ἵνα μόνον ἄψωνται τοῦ κρασπέδου τοῦ ἱματίου αὐτοῦ· καὶ ὅσοι ἤψαντο διεσώθησαν.

διεσώθησαν- The preposition δια, through or through, indicates complete restoration.

BYZ **Matthew 15:1** Τότε προσέρχονται τῷ Ἰησοῦ οἱ ἀπὸ Ἱεροσολύμων γραμματεῖς καὶ Φαρισαῖοι, λέγοντες,

BYZ **Matthew 15:2** Διὰ τί οἱ μαθηταί σου παραβαίνουσιν τὴν παράδοσιν τῶν πρεσβυτέρων; Οὐ γὰρ νίπτονται τὰς χεῖρας αὐτῶν, ὅταν ἄρτον ἐσθίωσιν.

παραβαίνουσιν verb ind pres act 3pp from παραβαίνω - in the NT always in relation to wrongdoing; (1) intransitively give up, turn aside (AC 1.25); (2) transitively; (a) overstep, offend (against) (MT 15.2); (b) of going beyond what God's law allows transgress, break, disregard (MT 15.3)

- b) Like Catholics who look to church dogma to discover what Scripture really means
 - c) Scribes copied and assembled the books of the Bible and they began to comment on various passages
 - d) Over time, the comments were more numerous than the scripture
 - e) The distinction between Scripture and traditions decreased and was blurred
 - f) Eventually tradition was more familiar and revered than God's Word
6. The washing here had nothing to do with personal hygiene but referred to ceremonial rinsing
- a) The purpose was to remove the ritual defilement caused by touching something unclean
 - b) Some rabbis taught that a demon named Shibtah attached itself to people's hands while they slept and if he were not ceremonially washed away he would actually enter the body through the food handled by defiled hands
 - c) Another rabbi taught that it would be better to walk four miles out of the way to get water than to eat with unwashed hands
 - d) Water was poured on both hands with fingers pointing upwards. The water must run down the hands and drip off at the wrist. Next the water was placed on hands with fingers pointing down. Then each hand was cleansed with the fist of the other hand. A strict Jew would do this before every meal and between every course of the meal.

B. The Condemnation – vs 3-9

1. The Question that Jesus Asked the Pharisees
3 But he answered and said unto them, Why do ye also transgress the commandment of God by your tradition?
- a) Before answering the charge of the Pharisees, Jesus first gave a counter charge
 - b) He did not deny that His disciples disregarded the rabbinical traditions – He would later explain that
 - c) Jesus first asked the Pharisees a much more important question – “Why do you transgress the commandments of God for the sake of your traditions?”
2. The Commandment Jesus Pointed Out to the Pharisees
4 For God commanded, saying, Honour thy father and mother: and, He that curseth father or mother, let him die the death. 5 But ye say, Whosoever shall say to his father or his mother, It is a gift, by whatsoever thou mightest be profited by me; 6 And honour not his father or his mother, he shall be free. Thus have ye made the commandment of God of none effect by your tradition.
- a) The Pharisees knew all the commandments but they had a way to get out of helping their parents
 - b) A tradition had developed that allowed a person to call all his possessions “korban”, thereby dedicating them to God.
 - c) A vow to God must not be violated – Num 30:2 and so those possessions could not be used for anything but service to God
 - d) If one's parents needed financial help all he had to do was tell them, “Anything of mine you might have been helped by has been given to God.”

Y^Z **Matthew 15:3** Ὁ δὲ ἀποκριθεὶς εἶπεν αὐτοῖς, Διὰ τί καὶ ὑμεῖς παραβαίνετε τὴν ἐντολὴν τοῦ θεοῦ διὰ τὴν παράδοσιν ὑμῶν;

BYZ **Matthew 15:4** Ὁ γὰρ θεὸς ἐνετείλατο, λέγων, Τίμα τὸν πατέρα καὶ τὴν μητέρα· καί, Ὁ κακολογῶν πατέρα ἢ μητέρα θανάτῳ τελευτάτω

BYZ **Matthew 15:5** ὑμεῖς δὲ λέγετε, Ὅς ἂν εἴπῃ τῷ πατρὶ ἢ τῇ μητρὶ, Δῶρον, ὃ ἐὰν ἐξ ἐμοῦ ὠφελῆθῃς, καὶ οὐ μὴ τιμῆσῃ τὸν πατέρα αὐτοῦ ἢ τὴν μητέρα αὐτοῦ·

BYZ **Matthew 15:6** καὶ ἠκυρώσατε τὴν ἐντολὴν τοῦ θεοῦ διὰ τὴν παράδοσιν ὑμῶν·

Ye have made void the word of God (ekurōsate ton logon tou theou). It was a stinging indictment that laid bare the hollow pretence of their quibbles about handwashing. Kuros means force or authority, akuros is without authority, null and void. It is a late verb, akuroō but in the LXX, Galatians 3:17; and in the papyri Adjective, verb, and substantive occur in legal phraseology like cancelling a will, etc. The moral force of God's law is annulled by their hairsplitting technicalities and immoral conduct

3. Tradition Overruled God's Commandments – vs 7-9 →
The korban possessions remained in the person's own hands
 - a) *He could use those possessions for his own needs simply by saying "korban" over them again*
 - b) *The Jew could declare the possession sacred and unusable, and then just as easily he could declare the vow reversed*
 - c) *The purpose was to circumvent the fifth commandment*
 - d) *Traditions often require no integrity of heart and they are easily substituted for true worship and obedience*
 - e) *They end up honoring God with their lips but their hearts are far from God*

III. The Correcting Teacher – vs 10-20

A. The Principle Stated – vs 10-11

10 And he called the multitude, and said unto them, Hear, and understand: 11 Not that which goeth into the mouth defileth a man; but that which cometh out of the mouth, this defileth a man.

1. The multitude had been on the sidelines, watching Jesus deal with the Pharisees
2. Now Jesus explains to the multitudes what he has said
3. "hear and understand" = listen carefully and pay close attention
4. Spiritual defilement is a matter of the inside not of the outside
5. No spiritual or moral defilement can result from what we eat
6. Not washing your hands does not defile, but what is in the heart defiles

B. The Principle Violated – vs 12-14

12 Then came his disciples, and said unto him, Knowest thou that the Pharisees were offended, after they heard this saying? 13 But he answered and said, Every plant, which my heavenly Father hath not planted, shall be rooted up. 14 Let them alone: they be blind leaders of the blind. And if the blind lead the blind, both shall fall into the ditch.

1. Just as Jewish opposition to Jesus would continue to increase, so his accusations against them was increasing
2. See that hypocrites are offended by the truth
3. The hypocrites are destined for judgment – "rooted up"
4. Hypocrites always lead others to destruction and disaster
5. It is bad enough that they cannot and will not see the truth, but they lead others into their ungodliness

C. The Principle Elucidated – vs 15-20

15 Then answered Peter and said unto him, Declare unto us this parable. 16 And Jesus said, Are ye also yet without understanding? 17 Do not ye yet understand, that whatsoever entereth in at the mouth goeth into the belly, and is cast out into the draught? 18 But those things which proceed out of the mouth come forth from the heart; and they defile the man. 19 For out of the heart proceed evil thoughts, murders, adulteries, fornications, thefts, false witness, blasphemies: 20 These are the things which defile a man: but to eat with unwashen hands defileth not a man.

1. The parable that Peter mentioned here is in vs 11
2. It is not so much that the disciple did not understand what Jesus meant, they just found it difficult to accept
3. For many years, Peter had been unable to accept that all foods were clean
4. Ceremonies, rituals and external practices cannot cleanse a person spiritually, and failure to observe them cannot defile a person spiritually
5. The things that defile a man come from an unwashed heart not from unwashed hands
6. We need clean hearts – not clean hands

7 Ye hypocrites, well did Esaias prophesy of you, saying, 8 This people draweth nigh unto me with their mouth, and honoureth me with their lips; but their heart is far from me. 9 But in vain they do worship me, teaching for doctrines the commandments of men.

7 ὑποκριταί, καλῶς προεφήτευσεν περὶ ὑμῶν Ἡσαΐας, λέγων, 8 Ἐγγίζει μοι ὁ λαὸς οὗτος τῶ στόματι αὐτῶν, καὶ τοῖς χεῖλεσίν με τιμᾷ· ἡ δὲ καρδία αὐτῶν πόρρω ἀπέχει ἀπ' ἐμοῦ. 9 Μάτην δὲ σέβονται με, διδάσκοντες διδασκαλίας ἐντάλματα ἀνθρώπων 10 Καὶ προσκαλεσάμενος τὸν ὄχλον, εἶπεν αὐτοῖς, Ἀκούετε καὶ συνίετε. 11 Οὐ τὸ εἰσερχόμενον εἰς τὸ στόμα κοινοῖ τὸν ἄνθρωπον· ἀλλὰ τὸ ἐκπορευόμενον ἐκ τοῦ στόματος, τοῦτο κοινοῖ τὸν ἄνθρωπον. 12 Τότε προσελθόντες οἱ μαθηταὶ αὐτοῦ εἶπον αὐτῷ, Οἶδας ὅτι οἱ Φαρισαῖοι ἀκούσαντες τὸν λόγον ἐσκανδαλίσθησαν; 13 Ὁ δὲ ἀποκριθεὶς εἶπεν, Πᾶσα φυτεία, ἣν οὐκ ἐφύτευσεν ὁ πατήρ μου ὁ οὐράνιος, ἐκριζωθήσεται. 14 Ἄφετε αὐτούς· ὁδηγοὶ εἰσιν τυφλοὶ τυφλῶν· τυφλὸς δὲ τυφλὸν ἐὰν ὀδηγῇ, ἀμφότεροι εἰς βόθυνον πεσοῦνται. 15 Ἀποκριθεὶς δὲ ὁ Πέτρος εἶπεν αὐτῷ, Φράσον ἡμῖν τὴν παραβολὴν ταύτην. 16 Ὁ δὲ Ἰησοῦς εἶπεν, Ἀκμὴν καὶ ὑμεῖς ἀσύνετοί ἐστε; 17 Οὐπω νοεῖτε, ὅτι πᾶν τὸ εἰσπορευόμενον εἰς τὸ στόμα εἰς τὴν κοιλίαν χωρεῖ, καὶ εἰς ἀφεδρῶνα ἐκβάλλεται; 18 Τὰ δὲ ἐκπορευόμενα ἐκ τοῦ στόματος ἐκ τῆς καρδίας ἐξέρχεται, κάκεῖνα κοινοῖ τὸν ἄνθρωπον.